



U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
Southern District of Georgia

Post Office Box 8999

Savannah, GA 31412
(912) 652-4422 / FAX (912) 652-4471

100 Bull Street

Savannah, GA 31401

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
APRIL 8, 2003

CONTACT: DAN DRAKE
Fax: (912)652-4422

HOME REPAIR FRAUD SCHEME INDICTMENT RETURNED

SAVANNAH: Rick Thompson, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Georgia, announced today that the federal grand jury sitting in Savannah, Georgia, returned an indictment charging Sean Olds, Brenda Thrift, Eric Scott Brantley, Christopher Benjamin, Christopher Palese and George Michael McGahee, with twenty four counts of wire fraud. The Indictment charges that between January 1, 2000, and April 20, 2001, the defendants, along with others not named in the indictment, engaged in a scheme to defraud a St. Simons Island resident by claiming to have performed construction or repair work on the victim's residence, when in fact the work was not performed as defendants had claimed. The indictment alleges that the defendants received over \$83,000 in wire transfers from the victim during the period from December 2000 to April 2001.

The maximum punishment for the wire fraud charges is up to 5 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000 on each of the 24 counts.

Thompson stressed that an indictment is only an accusation and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are entitled to a trial, in which it will be the government's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. Thompson further stated that the government's investigation is continuing to determine the extent of other individuals' involvement in this home repair fraud scheme.

The case was investigated by Special Agent Tony Alig of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Detective Mike Delaqua of the Glynn County, Georgia Police Department. The government is represented by Assistant United States Attorney Jeffrey J. Buerstatte.

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